

## Philosophy of Relation in John Paul II's New Feminism

### ROUGH DRAFT

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Mary, Sect of Wisdom  
Pray for us

At first sight, the phrase "John Paul II's New Feminism" seems to be a contradiction. *It makes Catholics uncomfortable and it makes Feminists uncomfortable* because feminism is an ideology, a rational support of causes, while John Paul II follows the teachings of a living Divine Person, Jesus Christ. Thus, just as it is contradictory to have a Catholic Secularism, Catholic Marxism, or Catholic Freudianism, so a Catholic Feminism would seem to hold the same *prima facie* logical impossibility.

The Danish Protestant philosopher Soren Kierkegaard suggested resolving a seeming contradiction between faith and reason into a paradox in *Fear and Trembling* (through the pseudonymous author Johannes de Silentio):

Then faith's paradox is this, that the single individual is higher than the universal, that the single individual... determines his relation to the universal through his relation to the absolute, not his relation to the absolute through his relation to the universal.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Great Britain: Penguin, 1985), Prolegomena II, p. 97-98. Kierkegaard's paradox is limited, however, because it suggests that the single individual is isolated and unable to communicate, while John Paul II's stance of faith is able to be well articulated.

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✓ Drawing an analogy from Kierkegaard's approach to paradox, when feminism and Catholicism are both universalized, they appear mutually exclusive. Universal principles of most forms of feminism view organized religion, especially Catholicism, and the Christian God as enemies. This kind of 'feminist' could not be joined to the contradictory universal, 'Catholic'; nor could a particular 'Catholic' be joined to a contradictory universal, 'feminist.' Yet, new feminism, as John Paul II defines it, is clearly God centred; it welcomes new feminists within the Catholic Church and missions them towards particular kinds of actions in contemporary culture.

John Paul II has since 1995 used the expression "New Feminism" in his Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*. Here new feminism is described as a call and duty of Catholic women. In his words: "it depends on them [women] to promote a "new feminism ..." to transform culture.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we need to go deeper in our analysis than to view the phrase "John Paul II's New Feminism" or "new feminist Catholic" as either a contradiction or paradox. Something else is happening here, something more than appears at first glance. Why is he asking Catholics to become new feminists and feminists to become new feminist Catholics? Could it be that he wants us to engage with this contradictory phrase in such a way that we discover something new through the difficult encounter?

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<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, in *Origins*, Vol. 24, no. 42 (April 6, 1995): 690-733, #99. In May 1997 Helen Alvaré, who works for the United States Bishop's Conference published an article entitled "The New Feminism" in *Liguorian Magazine* (May 1997) and Mary Ann Glendon, the head of the Vatican Delegation to the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing wrote an article entitled "The Pope's New Feminism" in *Crisis* (March 1997). Then in May 2001, a major Pontifical University in Rome sponsored an international conference entitled: "Women and Cultures in the Perspective of a New Feminism." The conference was held at the Regina Apostolorum Athenaeum, and included such prominent Catholic participation as Professor Angela Ales Bello, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Pontifical Lateran University and Alicja Crzeskowiak, President of the Polish Senate. See Zenit.org News Agency, May 23, 2001.

Perhaps a hint of the Pope's intentions may be discovered by rereading the final two sentences of the Lenten retreat he preached to the Papal Household of Pope Paul VI in March 1976. After referring to the present time as a new Advent for humanity and the Church, the then Cardinal Karol Wojtyla concluded:

[This is] a time of great trial but also of great hope. For just such a time as this we have been given the sign: Christ, "sign of contradiction" (Lk 2,34). And the woman clothed with the sun: "A great sign in the heavens" (Rev 12,1).<sup>3</sup>

Could the phrases "John Paul II's New Feminism" and "new feminist Catholic" be best understood as participating in the dynamic of a sign of contradiction rather than as a paradox or a simple contradiction?

Since we want to approach the topic of new feminism primarily from a philosophical perspective, we will turn now to the anthropology of relation underlying the Pope's new feminism. We will consider how a woman's identity either fosters or interferes with her relations with others. Several distinctions between new feminism and old feminism will be made. The analysis will be divided into four different categories of philosophical relation: 1) the soul/body relation, 2) interpersonal relation, 3) similarities in new and old feminism, and 4) differences in new and old feminism.

<sup>3</sup> Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II), *Sign of Contradiction* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 206.

# I

## The Soul/Body Relation

Since the soul/body relation was the starting point for several philosophies of the person and of woman's identity proposed throughout the history of philosophy, it is a reasonable starting point for our analysis. In *The Acting Person* Karol Wojtyla tells the reader that he wants "to rethink anew the dynamic human reality in terms of the reality of the acting person."<sup>4</sup>

Aristotle had argued that the soul must always be understood as the act of a particular body. St. Thomas concurred that the [soul/body] composite is actualized by the soul.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the act of the soul has a certain kind of priority in understanding the human being. A particular person cannot be understood without reference to the single lived soul/body composite. Wojtyla affirms: "It is to metaphysical analysis that we owe the knowledge of the human soul as the principle underlying the unity of the being and the life of a concrete person."<sup>6</sup>

Aristotle contributed the key concepts of actuality and potentiality as a way to consider the dynamism of a developing human being. A woman or man develops towards an end or perfection contained formally, finally, and efficiently within the soul and materially within the body. The composite human being needs to be understood within this dynamism of actuality and potentiality. Wojtyla uses Aristotle's notions while infusing them with a new dynamism drawn from a variety of contemporary sources:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1948), 5 vols., Vol I, Pt. I, Q. 77, art. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979), 186.

An insight into the relation between the soul and the body may be reached only through the total experience of man.<sup>7</sup> The notion of the "integration," as of the "transcendence," of the "person in the action" serves to circumscribe --- in various perspectives --- the content of this experience.<sup>7</sup>

Through human acts, the person integrates the soul and body. Through human acts the person transcends limitations of space, time, and history. For Wojtyla, the human person is a dynamic composit reality, capable of continuous actualization towards a more perfect identity. del 3

New feminism draws upon these two fundamental components: *hylomorphism* and a dynamic reality of acting persons. The metaphysics of *hylomorphism* holds that the soul is the act of the body and that the person is a unity of soul and body.<sup>8</sup> The phenomenology of human experience holds that the human body must always be situated within the reality that a woman or a man is a person, and that an act reveals the person. When one or the other component of the soul/body relation is accentuated to the detriment of the other component, a distortion in gender identity occurs and the real potentiality of a person is thwarted in the face of "pseudo ends." (As dealing with new feminism, my discussion will center on woman's identity.) del

The first systematic distortion of the soul/body relation with respect to woman's identity, often called 'the unisex distinction,' occurred in Book V of Plato's *Republic*, where it was argued that the begetting or bearing of children had nothing to do with the nature of a man or a woman. Plato argued that the nature of the human being was determined by the quality of a

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<sup>7</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 256.

<sup>8</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979), "... the traditional philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas, which ... discovers in [the human being] alongside of the *hylic* or material element also the element of *morphe* or form; hence the theory of *hylomorphism* and the analysis of the human being carried out within its frame." p. 203.

sexless soul alone.<sup>9</sup> Plato proposed in his utopia that men and women with the same kind of natures should do the same things and receive the same education. He added that there should be a slight compensation in time for women's general weakness and men's greater strength.<sup>10</sup> Socrates, Plato's spokesman in the *Republic*, was aware of social conditions in Greece which limited women's development. Socrates argued that leaving women's potential undeveloped was not only unnatural, but also detrimental to the state.<sup>11</sup> Plato recognized the equal dignity of women and men, and they wanted to restructure society so that all women and men could reach their full potential of wisdom, goodness, and participation in society. Yet, his proposal failed precisely because he did not have an understanding of the proper soul/body relation.<sup>12</sup>

This distortion was continued by the Cartesian mind/body distinction which asserted the superiority of the autonomous mind over the body. A new era of unisex theories entered western philosophy, becoming the foundation for several forms of Cartesian Feminism. While trying to help women achieve a fuller actualization by rights to education and participation in civil government, the Cartesian feminists consistently appealed to a sexless reason as the core of a

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<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Republic* 454e, in *The Collected Works of Plato*. eds. Hamilton and Cairns (Princeton: Bollingen, 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Republic* 455e. "Then there is no pursuit of the administrators of a state that belongs to a woman because she is a woman or to a man because he is a man. But the natural capacities are distributed alike among both creatures, and women naturally share in all pursuits and men in all..."

<sup>11</sup> Plato, *Republic* 456c.

<sup>12</sup> See Sr. Prudence Allen, RSM *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution* (750 BC-1250AD) (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1997) and *The Humanist Reformation* (1250-1500) (Grand Rapids, Michigal and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2002) for many versions of this neoplatonist argument about woman's identity.

woman's identity. This unisex model suffered from the same problem as their ancestral neoplatonic model, namely of defending equality at the expense of real differentiation.

John Paul II consistently argues against this unisex type of error. At the beginning of his Pontificate in 1979, the Pope states that men and women are fundamentally different ways of being persons. Reflecting on the story of Adam, he states: "Precisely the function of sex, which is, in a sense, a 'constituent part of the person' (not just an 'attribute of the person'), proves how deeply man, with all his spiritual solitude, with the uniqueness, never to be repeated, of his person, is constituted by the body as 'he' or 'she'."<sup>13</sup> Nearly twenty years later, in his 1995 Letter to Women, John Paul II continues to assert a real difference in sex and gender identity along with a principle of complementarity: "Woman complements man, just as man complements woman: men and women are complementary."<sup>14</sup> He does however accept the unisex principle of the fundamental equality of man and woman: "Womanhood expresses the 'human' just as much as manhood does, but in a different and complementary way."<sup>15</sup>

Another type of systematic distortion in the soul/body relation, called 'the polarization distortion,' occurred in the works of Aristotle. The Greek Philosopher tried in Book I of the Politics to correct some of the difficulties within the Platonic unisex theory. Aristotle erroneously emphasized a particular bodily configuration in women, concluding that the female was by nature inferior to the male. His particular assumption was that the female body was

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<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*, (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1981), Audience of November 21, 1979, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Women* (June 29, 1995), in *The Genius of Women* (Washington DC: NCCB/USCC, 1999), pp. 45-59, #7.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

colder than the male's. This led to the consequences that her reasoning powers were weakened, ethical judgment impaired, ability to generate fertile seed blocked, and virtues mitigated in relation to man. Aristotle's sex and gender polarity theory was systematically transmitted and enhanced by later authors.<sup>16</sup> The error in this traditional gender polarity view was not so much that the body *per se* was overvalued as that a particular aspect of the bodily identity of woman was erroneously identified and overvalued. This particular characteristic (her coldness, infertility, etc.) had deep seated negative consequences for her soul (her weakness in reasoning, ethical judgment, and political life).

In late Renaissance philosophy a mirror image of this traditional polarity view emerged. Woman is thought to be by nature superior to the male, because of a particular aspect of her body which is overvalued. For example, Henry Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1536) argued for woman's natural superiority from her generation from the refined bone of man. Lucrezia Marinelli (1571-1653) argued that women's virtues were greater and vices less than men because of the greater balance within her nature. In more recent times, some radical feminists defend the superiority of a woman's genes, anatomy, hormones, or generative capacities. Inversely, some male theorists argue that the male genes, anatomy, hormones or generative capacities are naturally superior to the female.<sup>17</sup> All of these polarity theories derive from an emphasis on a bodily aspect, drawing a consequent imbalance with the soul/body relation.

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<sup>16</sup> Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, vols. 1 and 2 for detailed accounts of this transmission.

<sup>17</sup> See Sr. Prudence Allen, R.S.M., "Sex Unity, Polarity, or Complementarity," in *Women and Men: Interdisciplinary Readings on Gender*, ed. Greta Hoffman Nemiroff (Canada: Fitzhenry and Whiteside Ltd., 1987), 3-20.

John Paul II argues against all forms of traditional and reverse polarity by asserting unequivocally the fundamental equality of men and women in dignity and worth. He often invokes a theological defence of this equality. Two such examples are found in his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*: 1) "... both man and woman are human beings to an equal degree, both are created in God's image;" and 2) "Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God."<sup>18</sup> He also offers a philosophical defence of human dignity by an appeal to experience:

It [the natural dignity of the person] is also verified by the whole of humanity in its ongoing experience: in the experience of history, culture, technology, creativity, and production. The effects of human activity in various communities testify to this dignity.<sup>19</sup>

The appeal to human experience is an important foundation for new feminism. Experience draws upon the unity of body and soul through the operation of the senses and of consciousness. In *The Acting Person* we read: "An insight into the relation between the soul and the body may be reached only through the total experience of man"; and "... the soul-body relation is also intuitively given - in an implicit way - in the experience of man as a real being."<sup>20</sup>

Recognition of the simultaneous equal dignity and significant differentiation of woman and man's identity came from Christian philosophy. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was the

<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1988), #6. Italics are John Paul II's emphasis.

<sup>19</sup> Karol Wojtyla, "On the Dignity of the Human Person (1976)," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York/Paris: Peter Lang, 1993), 178. At the beginning of the personalist movement in France, Emmanuel Mounier defended woman's dignity in an article entitled "La femme et aussi une personne" in *Esprit* (June 1936) 292-97. Karol Wojtyla, also perhaps following Mounier's lead, defended as above woman and man as two ways of being a person.

<sup>20</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 256 and 257.

first to attempt systematic arguments in support of this position. She made her anthropological foundation the body/soul relation by describing the effect of the humours and elements on human character.<sup>21</sup> More recently St. Edith Stein (1891-1942) offered a phenomenological defence of this theory by considering the lived experience of the body in both women and men.<sup>22</sup> Karol Wojtyla, perhaps following Stein's intellectual lead, in *Love and Responsibility*, argued for the fundamental equal dignity of the sexes and that woman's body disposed her in a particular way to pay attention to another person.<sup>23</sup>

This continuous search for a foundation for integral gender complementarity is an important part of the relational philosophy of many Christian philosophers in the western tradition. It involves always seeking a proper balance in the soul/body relation. As the balance shifts the complementarity is in danger of sliding into either a unisex or a polarity model. Some might argue that Hildegard placed too much emphasis on the body's influence on the soul; while others might argue that Stein placed too much emphasis on the soul's influence on the body. Even so these theorists remained within the bounds of a complementarity model. Beyond the discussion of soul/body relation there exists the fundamental category of interpersonal relations.

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<sup>21</sup> See Prudence Allen, RSM, "Hildegard of Bingen's Philosophy of Sex Identity," *Thought: A Review of Culture and Idea*, vol. 64, no. 254 (September 1989): 231-41.

<sup>22</sup> Edith Stein, *Essays on Woman* (Washington DC: ICS, 1987) and Prudence Allen, "Sex and Gender Differentiation in Hildegard of Bingen and Edith Stein," *Communio* 20 (Summer, 1993): 389-414.

<sup>23</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 250.

## II

### Interpersonal Relation

John Paul II's philosophical anthropology draws upon two historical traditions in its consideration of interpersonal relations: classical Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics and twentieth century personalism. Aristotle situated philosophical relation in the category of accidents in his *Categories*.<sup>24</sup> The inheritance of Aristotelian logic posed a problem for medieval philosophy which understood the Divine Persons in the Trinity as distinguished by essential, not accidental, relations. The natural question that occurred to medieval philosophers concerned whether the human person, created in the image of God, would also have essential, rather than accidental, relations.<sup>25</sup> Rev. Norris Clarke, S.J., recently argued for a creative retrieval of Thomas Aquinas' theory in considering relations as essential for human identity and for all kinds of real substantial entities: "... existing *in itself*, naturally flows over into being as relational, as turned *towards others* by its self-communicating action. *To be fully* is to be *substance-in-relation*."<sup>26</sup> This general principle of the way in which good naturally diffuses itself must be augmented when we consider the unique way in which persons communicate with other persons. There is an additional factor of free choice or of act communicating to act.

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<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *Categories* 1b25. See Sr. Prudence Allen, RSM, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution*, 104-106 and 210.

<sup>25</sup> See Jeffrey E. Brower, who has recently traced this systematic debate in "Medieval Theories of Relations, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 1999), ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2001/entries/Brower>.

<sup>26</sup> W. Norris Clarke, S.J., *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), p. 14. Fr. Clarke's emphasis.

*not* Drawing upon the metaphysical analysis of relations, it is proper to consider the soul as the act of the body. In a person's becoming, the body is considered a potentiality in relation to the soul, as in Thomas Aquinas' definition of the soul as "the act of a body having life potentially."<sup>27</sup> Yet, when we turn to consider interpersonal relations, we discover a mutuality of active participation of each nature. Although the powers of the soul, such as sight and hearing, may be characterized by potentiality as well as act, "the soul by its very essence is an act."<sup>28</sup> Interpersonal relations will be characterized by act meeting act.

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While Pope John Paul II is careful to root personalism in Thomistic philosophy, he is most interested in its practical and ethical consequences which were developed in the twentieth century by a number of Catholic philosophers.<sup>29</sup> The Holy Father tells us in *Gift and Mystery*: *that his was* "My formation within the cultural horizon of personalism also gave me a deeper awareness of how each individual is a unique person."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Pt. 1, Q. 77, art 1.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Pt. 1, Q. 77, art. 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> See the following sections in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York and Paris: Peter Lang, 1993), "The Problem of the Theory of Morality," 145-46 and "Thomistic Personalism," 155-65.

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 94. The personalist movement, began in France in 1934, when Jacques Maritain, Nikolai Berdjaev, Gabriel Marcel, and Emmanuel Mounier met together in Paris in a philosophy group and developed a "Personalist Manifesto." Mounier published an article in Cracow, Poland on his new movement in France shortly before Karol Wojtyla moved there to attend university. In 1942, in the midst of World War II, the first underground Polish translation of Mounier's "Personalist Manifesto" was distributed. In May 1946, shortly after the war ended, in May 1946 Mounier lectured at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow and published several articles in Polish journals; and in the summer of 1947, Karol Wojtyla visited France. These historical details may be confirmed by the following sources, Janusz Zablocki, "The Reception of the Personalism of Mounier in Poland," *Dialectics and Humanism*, no.3 (1978): 145-162 and George Huntston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, (New York: Seabury

Personalism emphasized the importance of interpersonal relations. In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul II refers to the "personalistic truth about man, who becomes fully himself to the extent that he gives himself as a free gift to others."<sup>31</sup> The founders of personalism described this essential aspect of personal identity in varied, yet similar ways. Gabriel Marcel, in the 1940 text *Du Refus à l'Invocation*, described availability (*disponibilité*) to give oneself to another as essential to the full exercise of personal freedom.<sup>32</sup> In a 1945 lecture, Jacques Maritain described personal love as "... capable of giving and of giving itself, capable of receiving not only this or that gift bestowed by another, but even another self as a gift, another self which bestows itself..." [Maritain continues:] ... "this brief consideration of love's own law brings us to the metaphysical problem of the person."<sup>33</sup> Karol Wojtyla, in his first book *Love and Responsibility* (1960) approaches the reciprocal acts of two persons: "The route from one 'I' to another leads through the free will, through a commitment of the will... It is reciprocity which determines whether that 'we' comes into existence in love."<sup>34</sup>

The early founders of personalism distinguished between an individual, who was self-focused, self-absorbed, and unavailable either to give the self to another or to receive the gift

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Press, 1981), 91-90.

<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 209. See theme of self gift developed in Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1970), Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 1952), and Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity* (New York: Noonday Press, 1969), chapter 2 'Belonging and disposability,' especially 50-57.

<sup>33</sup> Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, 'Individuality and Personality,' 39.

<sup>34</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 85.

of another and a person capable both of self-gift and availability to another. Emmanuel Mounier summarizes this distinction very well:

The self-reflective movement which constitutes 'the individual' contributes to the maintenance of the human shape. But the person is only growing in so far as he is continually purifying himself from the individual within him. He cannot do this by force of self-attention, but on the contrary by making himself *available* (Gabriel Marcel) and thereby more transparent both to himself and to others.<sup>35</sup>

Mounier identifies five 'original actions' of the person: going out of oneself, understanding oneself from another's point of view, taking upon oneself the joys and troubles of another, generous self-giving to another, and creative fidelity to the other person.<sup>36</sup> Pope John Paul integrates these particular personal actions in developing new feminism.

The anthropological structure of essentially interpersonal actions is described by Karol Wojtyla in *The Acting Person*. In a chapter entitled "Intersubjectivity by Participation" he states the following:

Participation thus represents a feature of the person itself, that innermost and homogeneous feature which determines that the person existing and acting together with others does so as a person. So far as acting itself is concerned, participation is responsible for the fact that the person acting together with others performs an action and fulfills himself in it. We see now that participation is the factor that determines the personalistic value of all cooperation. The sort of cooperation -- or, more precisely, of acting together with others -- in which the element of participation

<sup>35</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism*, translated from *Le personalisme* (1950) by Philip Mairet (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1952), 19. His emphasis.

<sup>36</sup> Mounier, *Personalism*, 20-22.

is missing, deprives the actions of the person of their personalistic value.<sup>37</sup>

He vigorously rejects a utilitarianism which places a premium on the usefulness that another person has for us. In the utilitarian model, the characteristics of perceived uselessness, weakness, intellectual impairment, ugliness, or lack of health are used in contemporary culture to support arguments for abortion or euthanasia, i.e., the ending of life of so called "devalued" existents. Wojtyla states: "The actualization of participation in relation to every other human being arises before each of us as a task."<sup>38</sup>

John Paul II introduces "the personalistic norm" as the way in which two persons ought to relate to one another. In *Love and Responsibility*, the personalistic norm is stated in a positive form as: the only proper attitude or action toward another person is love.<sup>39</sup> The personalistic norm may be restated: one ought always to act towards a human being (a person) as an end worthy of love. One ought never to reduce a human being (a person) to a means not worthy of love. In an early essay on "The Personal Structure of Self-Determination," he reflected on the personalistic dimension of this norm: "...it is precisely when one becomes a gift for others that one most fully becomes oneself. This "law of the gift," if it may be so designated, is inscribed deep within the dynamic structure of the person."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 269. See also, Karol Wojtyla, "Participation or Alienation," in *Person and Community*, 197-207.

<sup>38</sup> Wojtyla, "Participation or Alienation?", in *Person and Community*, 202-203.

<sup>39</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) 41 and 66-67. See also, Andrew Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism: Karol Wojtyla's Existential Personalism* (New Britain, Ct.: Mariel Publications, 1980), 31-33, 41, and 67-68. He uses the term personalistic norm rather than personalist norm.

<sup>40</sup> Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, 194.

Immanuel Kant's second articulation of the categorical imperative introduced the personalistic norm in the negative form: "One should always treat another person as an end in himself or herself and never as a means."<sup>41</sup> In spite of his reservations about Kant's post-Enlightenment isolation of the human being and the purely rational basis for his categorical imperative, Wojtyla cites Kant's norm against utilitarian ethics which tends to measure human beings according to their usefulness for economic or other pragmatic goals. As late as 1989 the Pope stated: "Kant recognized this truth and expressed it in his famous second categorical imperative: *act in such a way that the person is always an end and never a means of your action.*"<sup>42</sup>

The passions which spring up within a person are an important aspect of human experience and of interpersonal relations. In *The Acting Person*, Karol Wojtyla considered both the positive function of the passions in motivating a person towards an end and in showing the value of particular ends revealed by our acts. He describes the relation between emotivity, consciousness, and efficacy. At the same time, he analyzes how too much emotionalization of consciousness can interfere with ability to think and to choose good ends; it interferes with self-knowledge and with proper actualization of the person; it interferes with interpersonal

<sup>41</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978), SECT. 2, #438-9, 56-7. "The principle: Act with reference to every rational being (whether yourself or another) so that it is an end in itself in your maxim..." See, Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 27-28 and 37.

<sup>42</sup> Karol Wojtyla, "The Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis," *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 267.

relations.<sup>43</sup> To clarify this interaction of passion, consciousness, and choice, let us take one example, that of abortion, and consider what particular passions might be operative. John Paul II notes five: sorrow, fear, anger, pleasure, and desire.

A woman may choose to have an abortion out of sorrow. John Paul II refers to a woman being abandoned and left alone in a state of pregnancy. "...[she] alone pays and she pays all alone! How often is she abandoned with her pregnancy..."<sup>44</sup> She may have been used, hurt, and discarded by someone who did not love her. She may be unable to care for her child because of poverty or other reasons. To mitigate a deep interior suffering, the woman may choose to believe erroneously that she is not killing a human being. Her emotionalized consciousness leads her intellect to accept a distorted 'truth' which makes it easier for her will to choose the abortion. In *On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*, the Pope shows how Jesus Christ comes to meet a person in the heart of suffering just as he did when the woman caught in adultery was about to be stoned to death (*Jn 8:3-11*). This encounter with the one who is the Truth reveals untruth and heals the sorrow. In *Evangelium vitae* #99, John Paul II addresses women who have had an abortion: "The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly."

Another motivation for an abortion may be the passion of fear. The pregnant woman may be afraid of all sorts of (real or imagined) future sufferings. These could include fear about

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<sup>43</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, "The Emotionalization of Consciousness," 50-56 and "Personal Integration and the Psyche," 220-58.

<sup>44</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, #14.

giving birth to a handicapped child, fear of interruption of preset goals, fear of rejection because of the circumstances of the pregnancy, or fear of inability to care well for the child. To destroy the cause of the fear may be easier if the woman distorts the truth about the act of abortion. A remedy for fear is daring, and Pope John Paul II often encourages the bravery and heroism of women who chose to allow their developing child to be born.<sup>45</sup>

While anger may be appropriate as a response to an unjust aggressor, experienced in a terrorist or criminal act, the Pope argues that the innocent developing child can never be considered as an unjust aggressor, and that there can be no acceptable rationale for killing the child even if the mother has a rightful anger at the man who fathered it.<sup>46</sup> Sometimes anger is not directed at any man in particular. Here women may defend a "pseudo-right" to control their bodies. They wish to dominate their own bodies and also begin to dominate the bodies of other women through a misguided feminist ideology. Mary Ann Glendon noted the "colonialist" attitude embodied in the support for abortion by first world women at the Beijing UN conference.<sup>47</sup> It is also described as an attitude of supremacy, domination, or tyranny of the strong over the weak.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See *Evangelium vitae* #86.

<sup>46</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #60.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Ann Glendon, notes how "an exaggerated individualism in which key relevant provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are slighted -- for example, the obligation to provide 'special care and assistance' to motherhood. This selectivity thus marks another stop in the colonization of the broad and rich discourse of universal rights by an impoverished libertarian rights dialect." *Vatican Stance: Women's Conference Final Document*, p. 235.

<sup>48</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #23.

In Mulieris dignitatem #10 John Paul II asks: "In the name of liberation from male 'domination,' women must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine 'originality.'" He repeats this request to women in Evangelium vitae #99 to reject "the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination,'" which he views as a consequence of the rejection of God.<sup>49</sup> From this attitude of opposition to God "everything else becomes profoundly distorted. Nature itself, from being mater (mother), is now reduced to being "matter," and is subjected to every kind of manipulation."<sup>50</sup> When the justification for abortion is connected with the false claim that all that occurs is the termination of pregnancy and elimination of some tissue, the developing human being is reduced to matter to be dominated by the mother and manipulated by the most modern uses of technology.

Sometimes a defence of abortion may be based on a desire for the pleasure of the sexual act without any connection to a child who could possibly result from the act. The Pope describes this as a practice

rooted in a hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and [implying] ... a self-centered concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfilment. The life which could result from a sexual encounter thus becomes an enemy to be avoided at all costs, and abortion

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<sup>49</sup> See Karol Wojtyla's early identification of a philosophical root of this problem in "The Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis," in *Person and Community*: "Nietzsche proclaimed the death of God. After God, the human being began to die. The image of the human being is gradually being erased from our culture, just as culture itself tends to disappear in an economic and political system where huge masses, bureaucracies, and gigantic machines predominate.", 275 note 17.

<sup>50</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #22.

becomes the only possible decisive response to failed contraception.<sup>51</sup>

As with most enemies, the one to be destroyed is described as a 'thing' rather than a human being worthy of dignity and life. A distortion of truth becomes a way to justify the killing in order to keep satisfying the passion for pleasure.

In *Love and Responsibility* Karol Wojtyla said that men, more than women, have a tendency to seek sensual pleasure in the sexual act, through their desire for a woman's body. Women, on the other hand, tend to use sexual relations out of a desire for nearness, affection, intimacy, and exclusivity.<sup>52</sup> This motivation is not primarily hedonistic, but rather utilitarian, the woman uses the man to satisfy her emotional needs. If she becomes pregnant, she might consider an abortion, particularly if the man did not want a child and she was concerned about losing the relationship. Once again, if truth about the act of abortion is distorted, then it would be easier for her to choose it as a viable option.

This desire for intimacy is in itself a very positive passion in the human person. It is ontologically a desire for authentic relationship and for genuine and lasting love. Karol Wojtyla notes that "True love, the kind of love of others worthy of a human person, is that in which our sensory energies and desires are subordinated to a basic understanding of the <sup>truth</sup> worth of the object of our love."<sup>53</sup> Thus, we need to consider what external and internal factors mitigate against a woman fulfilling this desire. Identifying these factors is one of the main goals of feminism. Now that the basic principles of the soul/body relation and interpersonal relation have

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<sup>51</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #13.

<sup>52</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 109-114.

<sup>53</sup> Wojtyla, "Thomistic Personalism," *Person and Community*, 173.

been elaborated, and an example of how interpersonal relations may be affected in a situation of the emotionalization of consciousness, we are in a better position to evaluate Pope John Paul II's new feminism. In the next two sections, we will consider similarities in new feminism and old feminism and differences between new feminism and old feminism.

### III

#### Similarities in New Feminism and Old Feminism

To begin this comparison of new and old feminism,<sup>54</sup> I would like to offer a 'heuristic' description of feminism as an organized "response to perceived limitations to the freedom of women to develop their potential for full personal growth and perfection."<sup>55</sup> It aims at identifying factors which inhibit the flourishing of a woman's equal dignity with man; and it offers methods for transforming or removing those factors or obstacles.

The Pope's own claim that "new feminism acknowledge[s] and affirm[s] the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society and overcome[s] all discrimination, violence and exploitation" is central here.<sup>56</sup> Similarities in new and old feminism will be found in the identification of kinds of discrimination, violence, and exploitation which limit women's full

<sup>54</sup> In 1882 Hubertine Auclert was the first to begin the public use of the term 'feminist' to describe her work for women's suffrage in her periodical *La Citoyenne*. The term "feminist" was adopted by a congress in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century, and it entered popular usage from that time on. See Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1988), 126.

<sup>55</sup> Sr. Prudence Allen, "Can Feminism be a Humanism?", *Etudes maritainiennes - Maritain Studies* (Vol 14 (1998): 109-140), 110.

<sup>56</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #99.

development. Even though these limitations pertain not exclusively to women, feminism reveals how they affect women in very specific ways.

## Discrimination

In an introductory way, we can say that discrimination often interferes with women's access to education or participation in civil society. From the perspective of philosophical anthropology, discrimination thwarts the development of the nature of a person. Discrimination in education keeps the higher faculty of the soul, the intellect in an inferior stage of development. While the will, memory, imagination, and senses may operate interiorly to their full capacity, discrimination in work and politics may severely limit the options for choice and sharing of one's gifts with society and culture. Therefore, in addition to the fact that discrimination contravenes human rights and involves clear injustice, it also harms the human person, and thus also harms society.

Karol Wojtyla's role in the development of *Gaudium et spes*, the Vatican II document on *The Church in the Modern World* is well documented.<sup>57</sup> Paragraph #29 states:

[A]ny kind of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design. It is deeply to be deplored that these basic personal rights are not yet being respected everywhere, as is the case with women who are denied the chance freely to

<sup>57</sup> See George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Harper, 1999), 158-180 and Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II* (Grand Rapids Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1997), 177-231.

choose a husband, or a state of life, or to have access to the same educational and cultural benefits as are available to men.<sup>58</sup>

The identification of particular kinds of discrimination against women is often explicitly stated in the writings of John Paul II. Education is cited in the *Holy See's Position Paper for the United Nations' Conference on Women* in 1995:

Access to education, on all levels, is a focal point in the liberation and promotion of women. Education is the prerequisite for access to employment, to personal autonomy and to complete participation in economic, social and political life.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to noting discrimination in education and culture, John Paul II speaks about discrimination against women in work and especially those who have chosen to be married and raise a family. In his *Letter to Women* #4:

Much remains to be done to prevent discrimination against those who have chosen to be wives and mothers. As far as personal rights are concerned, there is an urgent need to achieve real equality of spouses with regard to family rights and the recognition of everything that is a part of the rights, and duties of citizens in a democratic state.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Gaudium et spes in Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents*, Austin Flannery, OP, ed., (Northport: New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), #29. This passage is also quoted in the forward by Msgr. Dennis M. Schnur, to *Pope John Paul II On the Genius of Women*, (Washington DC: NCCB/USCC, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Holy See's Position Paper at Beijing*, #10. In the same document discrimination directed particularly toward women is explained as an attack on the principle of the equal dignity of all human beings: "Men and women enjoy the same identical dignity... Without a clear understanding of the meaning of human dignity, discrimination will never be avoided. Women are --- and have been historically --- the first to suffer. In reality discriminatory practices against women, in all their forms, are none other than the expression of a lack of recognition of the equal dignity of women.", #1.

<sup>60</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, July 1995, #4.

The Pope argues that women have a right to work, a right to remain at home to care for young children, and a right to both work and have children.<sup>61</sup>

The Holy Father's analysis of discrimination goes deeper than point out external areas of injustice and specific inequality. In his 1995 message for the world day of peace, John Paul II considers the deep effects of discrimination on the personal identity of women:

Another serious problem is found in places where the intolerable custom still exists of discriminating, from the earlier years, between boys and girls. If, from the very beginning, girls are looked down upon or regarded as inferior, their sense of dignity will be gravely impaired and their healthy development inevitably compromised. Discrimination in childhood will have lifelong effects and will prevent women from fully taking part in the life of society.<sup>62</sup>

## Violence

Considering now the second of Pope John Paul II's three categories of new feminism, violence radically contravenes a woman's exercise of free will. From the perspective of philosophical anthropology, the human person is wounded by violence in all its forms: verbal, visual, or physical. In a letter to Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of the United Nations

<sup>61</sup> This right was explicitly stated: "A woman has the right to choose between: having a profession, being simultaneously a mother and carrying on a profession, and being a mother and dedicating all her activity to the home.", John Paul II, *Holy See's position at Beijing Conference on Women* in *L'Osservatore Romano* n. 36 (6 September 1995), 1.1 See also an earlier articulation of this in John Paul II's *Encyclical on Human Work*, "It will redound to the credit of society to make it possible for a mother --- without inhibiting her freedom, without psychological or practical discrimination, and without penalizing her as compared with other women --- to devote herself to taking care of her children and educating them in accordance with their needs, which vary with age." #19."

<sup>62</sup> John Paul II, *World Day of Peace Message in The Genius of Women*, #8.

Fourth World Conference on Women, John Paul II asks "women to do even more to save society from the deadly virus of degradation and violence which is today witnessing a dramatic increase."<sup>63</sup>

The Pope has identified several ways in which women are particularly harmed by violence in his *Letter to Women*:

Then too, when we look at one of the most sensitive aspects of the situation of women in the world, how can we not mention the long and degrading history, albeit often an underground history, of violence against women in the area of sexuality? At the threshold of the Third Millennium we cannot remain indifferent and resigned before this phenomenon. The time has come to condemn vigorously the types of sexual violence which frequently have women for their object and to pass laws which effectively defend them from such violence.<sup>64</sup> } *act*

Violence reduces a woman to a thing to be dominated by the will of the man. While the exercise of her free will is inhibited, she none-the-less remains interiorly free, but wounded.<sup>65</sup>

In his Apostolic Letter *On the Dignity and Vocation of Woman* the Pope identifies the deeper root of violence against women as an effect of original sin which ruptures the fundamental equality in the original creation of man and woman:

But this threat is more serious for the woman, since domination takes the place of "being a sincere gift" and therefore living "for" the other; "he shall rule over you." This "domination" indicates the disturbance and loss of the stability of that fundamental equality

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<sup>63</sup> John Paul II, Welcome to Gertrude Mongella (May 1995), in *Genius of Women*, #5.

<sup>64</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, #5.

<sup>65</sup> In the *Holy See's Position Paper for Beijing* particular forms of violence against women are even more specifically identified: "Physical violence against women includes not only rape war, genital mutilation, forced prostitution and arranged marriages, but also forced contraception, sterilization and abortion.", #8.

which the man and the woman possess in the "unity of the two": and this is especially to the disadvantage of the woman...<sup>66</sup>

In *Evangelium vitae* Pope John Paul II considers the structure of a materialistic society which allows and even fosters the domination of the strong over the weak:

In the materialistic perspective described so far, interpersonal relations are seriously impoverished. The first to be harmed are women, children, the sick or suffering, and the elderly. The criterion of personal dignity --- which demands respect, generosity and service --- is replaced by the criterion of efficiency, functionality and usefulness: Others are considered not for what they "are," but for what the "have, do, and produce." This is the supremacy of the strong over the weak.<sup>67</sup>

Violence harms the soul/body potential development; it extends a wound in interpersonal relations. While both men and women are affected by this rupture of their fundamental equal dignity, women are 'especially disadvantaged' and 'seriously impoverished.'

### Exploitation

The third category which John Paul II identifies as an obstacle in women's development is exploitation. In exploitation, a woman is used as a means to a utilitarian or hedonistic goal, rather than treated as an end in herself. She is reduced from a someone worthy of love, to a thing to be used and discarded when no longer useful. The *Letter to Women* states:

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<sup>66</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, #10. In the same paragraph, he also identifies the roots in original sin of discrimination: "These words of Genesis refer directly to marriage, but indirectly they concern the different spheres of social life: the situations in which the woman remains disadvantaged or discriminated against by the fact of being a woman. The revealed truth concerning the creation of the human being as male and female constitutes the principal argument against all the objectively injurious and unjust situations which contain and express the inheritance of the sin which all human beings bear within themselves."

<sup>67</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #23.

Nor can we fail, in the name of the respect due to the human person, to condemn the widespread hedonistic and commercial culture which encourages the systematic exploitation of sexuality and corrupts even very young girls into letting their bodies be used for profit.<sup>68</sup>

Once again the Pope offers a deeper analysis of the utilitarian and hedonistic motivation which underlies exploitation of women. In the following passage from *Evangelium vitae* he shows how an imbalance in the philosophy of soul/body relation and of interpersonal relations contributes to this distorted situation:

Within this same cultural climate, the body is no longer perceived as a properly personal reality, a sign and place of relation with others, with God and with the world. It is reduced to pure materiality: It is simply a complex of organs, functions and energies to be used according to the sole criteria of pleasure and efficiency. Consequently, sexuality too is depersonalized and exploited: From being the sign, place and language of love, that is, of the gift of self and acceptance of another in all the other's richness as a person, it increasingly becomes the occasion and instrument for self-assertion and the selfish satisfaction of personal desires and instincts.<sup>69</sup>

The reduction of the body to a mechanical cluster of organs not only fosters exploitation of women and girls, but also "procedures that exploit living human embryos and fetuses" who have their own inherent human dignity that should not be transgressed by a violation of the personalistic norm.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, #5. In *Evangelium vitae*, the Pope directly quotes the passage from *Gaudium et spes* concerning the insult to human dignity that is evident in "slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons." John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, #3, quoting *Gaudium et spes*, #27.

<sup>69</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #23.

<sup>70</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #63.

Pope John Paul reiterates that exploitation wounds not only the person exploited, but society itself. He takes direct responsibility for Church members' historical participation in this injustice.<sup>71</sup> John Paul II's new feminism presents an organized analysis about obstacles for a woman to become (as a woman) what a human person is able to become or to develop her potential for full personal growth and perfection.

\* What is new about this kind of feminism? Systematic analyses of discrimination against women in education, work, and politics, of verbal and physical violence, and of exploitation in work and sexual activity have a long history.

Christine de Pizan (1363-1431), an early Renaissance feminist, explored obstacles against women's education, the violence of slander and physical violence against women, and the exploitation of widows. [She systematically defended women against false generalizations, wrongful accusations, injustices of word and deed, and satirical bias. In her major works on this topic *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* (1399), *Querelle de la rose* (1402), and *Le livre de la cité des dames* (1405), she argued for a renewed relation of justice between the human being and God, the moral value of faithful love between husband and wife, integral dialogue between women and men, the importance of virtue, and freedom from those factors which inhibit women and

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<sup>71</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, "Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity. Certainly it is no easy task to assign the blame for this, considering the many kinds of cultural conditioning which down the centuries have shaped ways of thinking and acting. And if objective blame, especially in particular historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry. May this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole Church, into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision. When it comes to setting women free from every kind of exploitation and domination, the Gospel contains an ever relevant message which goes back to the attitude of Jesus Christ himself." #3.

men from sustaining mature interpersonal relationships.<sup>72</sup> Marie de Gournay le Jars (1566-1645), a later Renaissance feminist, appealed to Plato in *Egalité des hommes et des femmes* to defend the topic of equal rights for women and men in political life; and in *Grief des dames* she argued against deprivation of goods and liberty that women experienced.<sup>73</sup>

The Cartesian feminists, Anna Maria von Schurman (1607-1678), Poullain de la Barre (1647-1723), and Mary Astell (1668-1731) argued systematically against discrimination in education on the basis of the same identity of mind in all human beings.<sup>74</sup> Mary Astell and other later Cartesian Feminists, Marie Jean Antoine Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794), Olympe de Gouges (Marie Gouze) (1748-1793), and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) used the Cartesian principle of equality to argue forcefully for women's rights and the need to overcome discrimination against women's participation in politics.<sup>75</sup> These detailed feminists arguments

<sup>72</sup> Christine de Pizan, *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*. Translated and edited by Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1990), *La Querelle de la rose: Letters and Documents*. Edited by Joseph L. Baird and John R. Kane (Chapel Hill, North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literature, 1978), and *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Translated by Earl Jeffrey Edwards. New York: Persea Press, 1983). For a detailed analysis of the quality and logic of her arguments see Sr. Prudence Allen, RSM, *The Concept of Woman: The Humanist Reformation (1250-1500)* (Grand Rapids, Mi./Cambridge, Great Britain: Eerdmans, 2001), chapter 7, 537-658.

<sup>73</sup> Marie de Gourney le Jars, *Egalité des hommes et des femmes* (1622) and *Grief des dames* (1626).

<sup>74</sup> Anna Maria van Schurmann, *De ingenii mulierbris ad doctrinum et meliores* (1641); Francois Poullain de la Barre, *De L'égalité des deux sex* (1673) and *De L'Education des dames pour la conduite de l'esprit dans les sciences et dan les moeurs entretiens* (1679); and Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for their Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (1694) and attributed to Astell *A farther Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696).

<sup>75</sup> Marie Jean Antoine Marquis de Condorcet, "Lettres d'un Bourgeois de New-Haven sur L'unité de la législation" in *Recherches Historiques et Politiques sur Les Etats-unis de L'Amérique septentrionale avec quatre Lettres d'un Bourgeois de New Haven sur L'uniteé de la législation* (Paris: 1788) and *Sur l'admission des femmes au droit de Cité* (1798); Olympe de

all occurred before the nineteenth century. John Paul II's reflections on these kinds of obstacles to women's development continue a long line of previous feminists arguments. Therefore, in this respect his feminism is not new.

More recently, "Marxist feminists" including Karl Marx himself, Frederick Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Marlene Dixon, Shulamith Firestone, to name a few, have focused much on the systematic exploitation of women's work in such far reaching areas as industry, housework, and prostitution.<sup>76</sup> While the Pope appreciated Marx's philosophical critique of alienation, he also noted that Marx neglected "... what is essential, [namely] how we relate to one another, even somehow despite the structures."<sup>77</sup> Secular humanist feminists, such as John Stuart Mill, Betty Friedan and members of the National Organization of Women, have promoted equal rights, the need for equal pay for equal work, and pushed out boundaries for the kind of work women

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Gouges, "Les Droits de la Femme" (Paris: 1701), translated in Darline Gay Levy, ed., *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795; Selected Documents with Notes and Commentary* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979); and Mary Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters with Reflections on Female Conduct in the more Important Duties of Life* (London: 1787), *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), and *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution and the Effect it has Produced in Europe* (1793-94). For a systematic analysis of these texts see, Sr. Prudence Allen, "Descartes, The Concept of Woman and the French Revolution," in *Revolution, Violence, and Equality*, eds. Yaeger Hudson and Creighton Peden *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, vol. 10, no. 3 (Lewiston/Queenstown/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press. 1990), pp. 61-78.

<sup>76</sup> Karl Marx, "Wages of Labor" and "Private Property and Communism," in *Early Writings*, (New York, Toronto, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 80 and 153-54; Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1972); Rosa Luxemburg, *Selected Political Writings* ed. Dick Howard (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971); Marlene Dixon, *The Future of Women* (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1980; and Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971).

<sup>77</sup> Wojtyla, "Participation or Alienation," in *Person and Community*, 206.

ought to be able to perform.<sup>78</sup> Phenomenological feminists like St. Edith Stein and existential feminists like Simone de Beauvoir focused in the twentieth century on ways in which culture and the lived experience of the body form deep feminine self-understanding in women.<sup>79</sup>

*Therefore* John Paul II's critique of discrimination, violence, and exploitation of women does not constitute a new feminism, but rather supports and updates many of the fundamental principles of old feminism. Differences between the two forms of feminism will be better seen in arguments about women's own responsibility to herself and to society.

## IV

### Differences Between New and Old Feminism

It may seem from the analysis in the preceding section that feminism only considers woman as a victim of cultural discrimination, violence, or exploitation. However, feminism also elaborates woman's responsibility and duty to change both herself and society. Borrowing a theme from Aristotle's *Ethics* (1095a 13-21) that everyone seeks happiness, but often differs as to what happiness is and how it should be sought, we could say that all women want to be liberated, but differ as to what women's liberation is and how it ought to be brought about.

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<sup>78</sup> John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (1869) in *Three Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963); and "National Organization of Women: Statement of Purpose (1986)" in *This Great Argument: The Rights of Women*, eds. Haminca Bosmajian and Haig Bosmajian (Menlo Park, Ca: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1972).

<sup>79</sup> Edith Stein, *Essays on Women* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1987) is a translation of *Die Frau Ihre Aufgabe nach Natur und Gnade* (Louvain: E. Nauwelaerts, 1959). Her public lectures on women began in 1928. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage, 1953 is a translation of the 1949 *Le Deuxieme sex*.

In 1995 Pope John Paul II pointed out that what is needed is the "ultimate anthropological basis of the dignity of women, making it evident as part of God's plan for humanity."<sup>80</sup> The anthropological foundation precedes any ethical norms. This means that norms are derived from the ontological foundation of human identity and not from other sources such as reason by itself, passions, or usefulness.<sup>81</sup> By drawing upon a wider range of John Paul II's works, some concrete measures for this anthropological foundation will be used to evaluate different forms of feminism.

In *Love and Responsibility*, Karol Wojtyla notes that "duty always grows out of the contact of the will with some norm."<sup>82</sup> We have already introduced one norm, the personalistic norm which can serve as one of our measures. It states that a person should always be treated as an end in the self, a someone worthy of love. Wojtyla also claims that "The commandment to love is...a form of the personalistic norm."<sup>83</sup> Embedded within the personalistic norm are two other guides for action: one can be called 'the principle of human dignity,' and the other the 'law of reciprocity', also known as 'law of the gift' and 'law of entrustment.'

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<sup>80</sup> John Paul II, referring back to his *World Day of Peace Message (#4)*, #6. He also said: "when one looks at the great process of women's liberation, 'the journey has been a difficult and complicated one, and at times, not without its share of mistakes. But it has been substantially a positive one, even if it is still unfinished... This journey must go on.' John Paul II, *Letter to Women*. This view was also noted by Mary Ann Glendon in her response as head of the Vatican Delegation to the Beijing Conference, *Vatican Stance: Women's Conference Final Document, Origins*, vol. 25, no. 15 (September 28, 1995), p. 234."

<sup>81</sup> See Wojtyla's critique of reasoning itself (Kant), passions (Hume), or usefulness (Mill) as the basis for ethics in "On the Directive or Subservient Role of Reason in Ethics in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant," and "Human Nature as the Basis of Ethical Formation," in *Person and Community*, 57-72 and 95-99.

<sup>82</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 120.

<sup>83</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 121.

C An act involves the exercise of both intellect and will, the intellect makes the judgment about the truth of something, and the will makes a choice that appears good based on the truth the intellect has grasped. In *Fides et ratio* Pope John Paul II defines a human being as "the one who seeks the truth."<sup>84</sup> There is a relentless drive to discover the truth about oneself and about the meaning of life deep within every woman. A person can run away from the truth at first because of fears about what demands it might make, yet in the end, the deep longing for union with the truth, even with the one who "is the way, the life, and the truth," propels the person to keep on a pilgrimage for a truth that is lasting and firm. The two pathways that are used in this search are faith and reason.

Woman's duty consists initially in being faithful to this search for truth and then making choices that are based on a true good. Let us now turn to evaluate how the principle of human life can be used as a measure to evaluate new and old forms of feminism.

### Principle of Human Life

The roots of this principle can be seen in the beginning of the often quoted passage from #99 EV: "In transforming culture so that it supports life, women occupy a place in thought and action which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a 'new feminism'..." When the Pope identifies "supporting life" as an obligation of new feminist women, he is not stating that women need to support the life of all plants or animals as do some ecofeminists. While he points to the need to have a proper respect for ecology, women hold a unique place in relation to supporting human life. This is why it is helpful to describe the duty and norm not simply as

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<sup>84</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1998), #28.

pro life, but a principle of human life: "Through your commitment to life ... you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life.<sup>85</sup>

The principle of human life has a wider reach as well: The dignity of human life should be supported towards its full development for the common good. The first factor of human dignity arises from the creation of the human being 'in the image of God' with the faculties of intellect and will. The dignity is in the human being, as a unified soul/body being, and not simply in the higher faculties of intellect or will. The dignity of human life is further supported for Christian feminists because Jesus Christ took on human nature. The duty contained in the principle of life itself is stated as follows in EV #81: "Society as a whole must respect, defend and promote the dignity of every human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person's life."

The second factor in the principle of human life, or full development, is also defended in EV #34: "The life which God bestows upon man is much more than mere existence in time. It is a drive towards fullness of life." and in #35 "... whether man or woman,... God ... [is] the definitive goal and fulfilment of every person." Again in EV #30 the duty contained is directly expressed by John Paul II: "...the Gospel of life includes everything that human experience and reason tell us about the value of human life, accepting it, exalting it and bringing it to fulfilment."

The third factor in the principle of human life, or common good, is a fundamental precept of personalism. We refer to the definition in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1906: "By common good is to be understood 'the sum total of social conditions which allow

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<sup>85</sup> *Evangelium vitae* #99. My emphasis.

people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily.' The common good concerns the life of all.<sup>86</sup> The duty associated with the common good is identified as the virtue of solidarity defined in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* #38: [The] "virtue... solidarity ... is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all."<sup>87</sup>

Using the principle of human life as a measure of old feminisms, only one or two forms agree with the new feminism of John Paul II. The Renaissance Feminism of Christine de Pizan coheres most fully with new feminism. As a faithful Catholic, this fourteenth century feminist considered it her duty to work for the full development of all women and of men for the common good. While her efforts were oriented towards eradicating discrimination, violence, and exploitation of women, her goal and methods were consistent with Christian principles of social action, namely with the virtue of solidarity.<sup>88</sup> The early Cartesian feminists, mostly Christian Protestants, also cohered with many aspects of new feminism with respect to the goal and methods of feminism. However, a difference in anthropological foundation, by following Descartes and placing the primary identity of woman in her sexless mind rather than in her soul/body unity, opened a fissure which eventually led to more recent Cartesian-type unisex

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<sup>86</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The reference included within this passage is to *Gaudium et spes* #26 and 74.

<sup>87</sup> John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* in *Origins*, vol. 17, no. 38 (March 3, 1988):643-660. See also, Sister Prudence Allen, RSM, "Foundational Virtues for Community," *Etudes maritainiennes/Maritain Studies*, no. 12 (1996): 133-149.

<sup>88</sup> For a detailed analysis of this see Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation 1250-1500*, chapter 7.

views. The effects of this fissure is seen in Locke's view of a developing fetus or an elderly person with mental impairment as not a person because of the lack of evident continuity of consciousness.<sup>89</sup>

Nineteenth and twentieth century Marxist feminism, radical feminism, and post-modern feminism are most strongly in conflict with new feminism because they reject the common good and support the development of only a portion of society: the working class, women, or the educated elite.<sup>90</sup> Our focus will not be the more radical forms of feminism, but moderate feminism derived from secular pragmatic humanism.<sup>91</sup> Secular humanism developed from post-

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<sup>89</sup> See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), "...in this alone consists personal identity, i.e., the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person...", Book II, chapter xxvii, #9., p. 138.

<sup>90</sup> A Marxist feminist argues that only the dignity of members of the working class should be supported. Karl Marx stated: "atheism as the annulment of God is the emergence of theoretical humanism, and communism as the annulment of private property is the vindication of real human life as man's property.", "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic," in *Early Writings* (New York/Toronto/London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 213. Shulamith Firestone argues for "freedom from the tyranny of reproduction and childbearing" and she asserts that "[m]achines thus could act as the perfect equalizer, obliterating the class system based on exploitation of labor.", *The Dialectic of Sex*, 225 and 201. A radical feminist supports only the full development of women while ignoring the development of men. A post-modernist feminist argues against human identity itself and acts to negate any forces in language or culture which try to maintain an identity for man or woman. Monique Wittig argues for example that gender must be destroyed and that women and men, "as classes and as categories of thought or language ... have to disappear, politically, economically, ideologically." "The Mark of Gender", *Feminist Issues* (fall 1985), 6 and "The Straight Mind," *Feminist Issues* (summer 1980), 108.

<sup>91</sup> Pragmatism, as an erroneous theory of truth, has been well critiqued by John Paul II in *Fides et ratio* #87-89. He applies its effects to feminism in the *Holy See's Position Paper for Beijing*, "Only the particular attention of the Conference to the inalienable dignity of each woman can avoid discrimination based on "pragmatic" reasoning.", #2.

enlightenment thought as articulated by various Humanist Manifestos of the 20th century.<sup>92</sup> It claims that all truths and laws are simply made by human beings and that human experience is the sole criteria for evaluating truth and moral values. Any threat to human autonomy and to the goal of living happily "without pain" in secular culture is aggressively attacked. Thus God, as the source of objective truth and moral values and organized religion which supports objective truth and moral values become identified as the enemy.<sup>93</sup> Differences between secular humanist feminism and new feminism can be sharpened by a consideration of the topic of abortion.

The National Action for Women (NOW), claims in its own publicity that "In 1967 NOW became the first national [American] organization to call for the legalization of abortion and for the repeal of all anti-abortion laws."<sup>94</sup> It identifies Betty Friedan as one of its founders. Focusing on what it calls 'abortion rights' NOW makes the further claim: "An estimated one in two adult women in the U.S. will have an abortion, thereby exercising a basic human right to control their bodies."<sup>95</sup> Feminists in this tradition base their actions and words on falsehoods and choices for the lesser good. In *Mulieris Dignitatem* #40 the Pope recalls that "the father of lies ... wishes to devour "the child."

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<sup>92</sup> See Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982) for the Humanist Manifestos of 1933 and 1973, 285-300.

<sup>93</sup> See the analysis by Sr. Prudence Allen, R.S.M., in "Can Feminism be a Humanism?" in *Etudes maritainiennes - Maritain Studies*, vol. 14 (1998), 109-140.

<sup>94</sup> See [www.now.org/history/history.html](http://www.now.org/history/history.html). See also "National Organization of Women: Statement of Purpose (1986)" in *This Great Argument: The Rights of Women*, eds. Hamica Bosmajian and Haig Bosmajian (Menlo Park, Ca: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1972), 190-91.

<sup>95</sup> See [www.now.org/issues/abortion/rights-rep.html](http://www.now.org/issues/abortion/rights-rep.html).

What distortions of truth does secular humanist feminism put forward in its attempt to justify abortion? The Pope identifies several falsehoods in his writings: 1) the developing human being, an embryo or fetus, is solely a part of woman's body; 2) the developing human being is a cluster of tissue and organs; 3) an abortion is simply an interruption of pregnancy; and 4) a woman has a right to a procured abortion. Underneath each of these lies is an erroneous philosophical anthropology which, if accepted and acted upon by a particular woman, will end with the killing of a child.

Concerning the argument that the fetus is a part of the woman's body, he states in *EV* #60:

Some people try to justify abortion by claiming that the result of conception, at least up to a certain number of days, cannot yet be considered a personal human life. But in fact, "from the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother; it is rather the new life of a new human being with his own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already."<sup>96</sup>

Drawing upon evidence from contemporary science, the Pope emphasizes the human genetic structure of the developing being. Leaving aside the religious arguments about the creation of an individual eternal soul by God at the moment of conception, he defends the independent identity of the conceived human being, even while dependent upon the mother for its developing life.

With respect to the misleading description that abortion simply ends some process, i.e., an interruption or termination of pregnancy in the mother, John Paul states in *EV* #59 that this erroneous use of vocabulary hides the real nature of the act, which is murder of an innocent

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<sup>96</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* #60 including in it a passage from *Donum Vitae*, I,1.

human being at the very beginning of his or her life. Joined to his explanation is an argument against the position that abortion is acceptable in situations of rape or incest where the pregnancy resulted from an aggressively unjust act. The implication of the old feminist argument is that just as the Church allows killing in self-defence, so abortion in this case should be allowed. Here is John Paul II's response again in EV #60:

[In procured abortion] the one eliminated is a human being at the very beginning of life. No one more absolutely innocent could be imagined. In no way could this human being ever be considered an aggressor, much less an unjust aggressor!

Abortion also contradicts the more fundamental basic human right to life, and therefore it can only be a "pseudo-right or no right at all."<sup>97</sup>

The world is permeated by different levels of law: divine law (also eternal law), moral law (also natural law), and civil law (also positive law). According to Catholic thought, there ought to be a hierarchy of priority in an ascending order of civil law conforming to moral law conforming to divine law. Divine law is revealed through scripture and ecclesiastical teachings, moral law may be discovered through reason but it is rooted in human nature and not simply a rational principle,<sup>98</sup> and civil laws vary from one civil unit to another but should have as their point of reference the moral law.<sup>99</sup> When the Pope states that there is no right to abortion, he

<sup>97</sup> In the *Position Paper for Beijing* #13, John Paul II states that: "The Holy See continues to insist that no human right to abortion exists because it contradicts the human right to life. The human right to life is the basic human right: all others stem from it." The right to life is equally shared by all human beings. In EV #58 the Pope explicitly states that it is not the case that some human beings (mothers) have a greater right to life than other human beings (developing unborn children).

<sup>98</sup> Karol Wojtyla, "The Human Person and Natural Law," in *Person and Community*, 181-85.

<sup>99</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #70.

is speaking of moral (or natural) and divine law which state that there is a right to human life. Civil law which contravenes moral and divine law is not authentic law just as laws in Germany in World War II supporting the genocide of jewish people were not authentic laws. In other words, no law can make an act licit when it is intrinsically illicit.<sup>100</sup> John Paul II summarizes his legal claim in *Evangelium Vitae* #72:

Laws which authorize and promote abortion and euthanasia are therefore radically opposed not only to the good of the individual but also to the common good; as such they are completely lacking in authentic juridical validity. Disregard for the right to life, precisely because it leads to the killing of the person whom society exists to serve, is what most directly conflicts with the possibility of achieving the common good. Consequently, a civil law authorizing abortion or euthanasia ceases by that very fact to be a true, morally binding civil law.

At this point we must ask why moderate feminists think so differently about this question?

A failure to comprehend the divine origins of law flows from secular pragmatic humanism which considers any dependence upon outside authority as a loss of human autonomy. This view does not understand that divine laws are life giving and life fulfilling, and that divine government exists to order all things towards the end, which is eternal union with God and the communion of saints.<sup>101</sup> The end of divine law is the fulfilment of personal life, and *ipso facto* the fulfilment of a woman's life. Extraordinary benefits will come to a person who freely chooses to stay in the line of divine law. Moral law and civil law ought to help a person achieve this through their freely chosen acts. When civil law does not conform to eternal law, when it promotes rejection of eternal law by distorted concepts, it actually interferes with a woman's

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<sup>100</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #62.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 22.

ability to become the person she was created to be. The roots of French, British, and American law in enlightenment mentality of Kant, Rousseau, Hobbes, and Locke have their effects on old feminisms which spring from these roots.<sup>102</sup>

What is the intense driving force of so many old feminists to support abortion? The Holy Father in his *Letter to Women* #5 observes: "Before being something to blame on the woman, it [abortion] is a crime for which guilt needs to be attributed to men and to the complicity of the general social environment."<sup>103</sup> In addition to the rejection of divine law, acts of men, and often strong cultural pressures, women have to ask what their own motives are. For example, we see a propulsion towards defending abortion even in ecofeminists, whose whole orientation is to support plant and lower forms of animal life. How can the discrepancy be explained when ecofeminists risk their lives to stop bulldozers from knocking down trees in forests they want to protect, yet they defend the "pseudo right" to use technology to kill an innocent developing human being?<sup>104</sup> Somehow the principle of the greater dignity of human life is missing from their thought and actions. In *Fides et ratio* #1 John Paul II reminds us that "[t]he admonition *Know yourself* was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be

<sup>102</sup> See *Evangelium vitae* # 20-24 for an analysis of how the loss of God leads to relativism, secularism, materialism, hedonism, and utilitarianism. Also see *Evangelium vitae* #52-75 for his extensive elaboration of the development of different attitudes towards law, and the position of new feminism towards them.

<sup>103</sup> This is repeated even more forcefully in the *Holy See's Position Paper for Beijing*: "Abortion is not a problem uniquely concerning women; it also involves men and society.... The irresponsibility of men, and often of society, is at the root of many abortions.", #13.

<sup>104</sup> See *Evangelium vitae* #22 where John Paul II notes an imbalance in thought in those persons who "consider it unlawful to interfere in any way with nature, practically 'divinizing it.'"

adopted as a minimal norm by those seeking to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as 'human beings,' that is, as those who 'know themselves.'"

### The Personalistic Norm and Women's Genius

John Paul II states that "it depends on women to promote a 'new feminism.'"<sup>105</sup> In this final part of our paper, we will consider the anthropological foundations of women's unique and decisive part in promoting new feminism. In *Mulieris Dignitatem* the Holy Father connects women's genius with the principle of human identity and the personalistic norm:

In our own time, the successes of science and technology make it possible to attain material well-being to a degree hitherto unknown. While this favors some, it pushes others to the margins of society. In this way, unilateral progress can also lead to a gradual loss of sensitivity for man, that is, for what is essentially human. In this sense, our time in particular awaits the manifestation of that "genius" which belongs to women, and which can ensure sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance: because they are human! [sic.] and because "the greatest of these is love (cf. 1 Cor 13:13)."<sup>106</sup>

Woman's part in culture and the basis for her unique genius are founded upon her openness to the life of another person and her capacity to treat other persons as worthy of love.

Complementarity is not simply a matter of biology or body; it has an ontological foundation. In the *Letter to Women* #7 the Pope states that: "Womanhood and manhood are complementarity not only from the physical and psychological points of view, but also from the

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<sup>105</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #99.

<sup>106</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #30.

ontological." He adds: "It is only through the duality of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' that the 'human' finds full realization."

Why does woman seem to have, more than man, a unique openness to another person?

What is the origin of her 'sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance' which the Pope associates with women's genius? To answer these questions we will draw upon a four-fold identification of the roots of complementarity John Paul II identifies: "Women and men are the illustration of a *biological, individual, personal and spiritual complementarity*.<sup>107</sup>

Concerning the biological roots of women's genius, Pope John Paul indicates two ways women's lived experience of the body predisposes her to be open to another person. Woman's lived experience from puberty to menopause of the biochemical changes occurring in her monthly cycles is "the origin of the maternal instinct" or the natural orientation of woman towards another human being.<sup>108</sup> Even if the woman never becomes pregnant, there is an interior maternal orientation towards conceiving and fostering the life of another human being. This interior access to the personalistic norm is not a biological determinism, but rather a psycho-emotive consciousness of a somato-vegetative aspect of her experience as a woman. A woman's body gives a different sort of preconditioned experience than does a man's body of the personalist orientation towards new life, if a woman chooses to access it.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> John Paul II, *Holy See's Position Paper for Beijing* 1.1. See also Sr. Prudence Allen, "Integral Sex Complementarity and the Theology of Communion," *Communio* 17 (winter 1990): 523-544.

<sup>108</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 280.

<sup>109</sup> See Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 88-95.

If a woman's experience expands beyond this awareness of her monthly preparations to receive new life to include the experiences of pregnancy, birth, and upbringing of a child, then she may strengthen the experiential foundation for her natural orientation towards another person. In an Angelus reflection of 1995, John Paul II notes: "Opening herself to motherhood, she feels the life in her womb unfolding and growing. This indescribable experience is a privilege of mothers, but all women have in some way an intuition of it, predisposed as they are to this miraculous gift."<sup>110</sup>

John Paul II considers how a woman's lived experience of motherhood has the potential to lead a man, who is in some ways outside of the process, into discovering his own fatherhood. Since a man's datum of subjective and objective experience differs by virtue of his lived material identity as a male person, the woman has to lead a man into the experience of fatherhood in a unique way:

The unique contact with the new human being developing within her gives rise to an attitude towards human beings--- not only towards her own child, but every human being--- which profoundly marks the woman's personality. It is commonly thought that women are more capable than men of paying attention to another person, and that motherhood develops this predisposition even more. The man --- even with all his sharing in parenthood --- remains "outside" the process of pregnancy and the baby's birth; in many ways he has to learn his own "fatherhood" from the mother.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> John Paul II, "Women's Vocation," in *The Genius of Women*, #1, p. 25.

<sup>111</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #18.

This is biological foundation for the "female genius" to which John Paul II refers. In *Mulieris Dignitatem* he confirms the same claim: "Motherhood implies from the beginning a special openness to the new person: and this is precisely the woman's "part.""<sup>112</sup>

When we turn to the second root of woman's genius, we need to consider woman as an individual. In the 19th century the existentialist philosophers Nietzsche and Kierkegaard taught that through the exercise of free will, a human being can become a self-defined individual. He or she can make the self into a unique individual self. Karol Wojtyla notes a difference between a biological experience of something happening in the self, and an experience of self-determination as an individual: "The first definition of self-determination in the experience of human action involves a sense of efficacy ... : 'I act' means 'I am the efficient cause' of my action and of my self-actualization as a subject, which is not the case when something merely 'happens in me.'<sup>113</sup>

Simone de Beauvoir developed the existentialist implications of a woman's capacity to become an individual. At the beginning of *The Second Sex* (1949) deBeauvoir argued that biology is not destiny: "At the bottom, life is concerned only in the survival of the species as a whole; at the top, life seeks expression through particular individuals, while accomplishing also the survival of the group."<sup>114</sup> While there is a great value in the self-determination that makes one an individual through willed acts; yet individuality in the extreme becomes detrimental to

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<sup>112</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #18.

<sup>113</sup> Wojtyla, "The Personal Structure of Self-Determination," in *Person and Community*, 189.

<sup>114</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 16. See also, Janine Langen, "Simone de Beauvoir: The Human Person as Co-existent," in *Images of the Human*, ed. Leonard Kennedy (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1995): 535-576.

interpersonal relations. DeBeauvoir, who based her existential analysis on the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre, argued that women had too long been defined by men or other forces outside the self. Karol Wojtyla criticized the extreme individualism of this form of existentialism: "Sartre, whose analysis leads him to conclude that the subject is closed in relation to others" seems to contradict the view that people can open up to relation with others.<sup>115</sup>

The phenomenological feminist St. Edith Stein in "Problems of Woman's Education" considered in some detail the difference between woman's biological nature as part of the human species, and her individual nature as a woman: "The species humanity, as well as the species femininity, is revealed differently in different individuals."<sup>116</sup> Stein gave much attention to the value of woman's choices to become a particular kind of individual open to others. She reflects on decisions about education, work, vocation, as well as her relation to her lived experience of the body. When considering education she notes:

We saw a threefold goal prescribed by the nature of woman: the development of her humanity, her womanhood, and her individuality. These are not separate goals just as the nature of a particular human individual is not divided into three parts but is one: it is human nature of a specifically feminine and individual character.<sup>117</sup>

That women have access to a maternal instinct has recently been challenged by some feminists who argue that many women appear not to manifest such an instinct while many men

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<sup>115</sup> Wojtyla, "Participation or Alienation?", in *Person and Community*, 203.

<sup>116</sup> Stein, *Essays on Women*, 172.

<sup>117</sup> See Edith Stein, *Essays on Women*, 182; and Sr. Prudence Allen, "Sex and gender differentiation in Hildegard of Bingen," *Communio* 20 (summer, 1993): 389-414, "Edith Stein: The Human Person as Male and Female," in *Images of the Human*, 397-432, and "The Passion of Edith Stein," *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, vol 1. no 2. (winter 2002): forthcoming.

do.<sup>118</sup> The Pope argues only that it is possible for women to access the maternal instinct if they choose to because of the lived experience women have of their bodies. "Every woman can observe in herself the changes which occur in the relevant phase of the cycle. Apart from these there exist objective scientific methods known to biology and medicine, which help us to determine the moment of ovulation, i.e., the beginning of the fertile period."<sup>119</sup> John Paul II does not deny that many women do not access the subjective source of the maternal instinct. He agrees that many women intentionally cut themselves off from this access by technological or psychological means. He concludes that access to this root of woman's genius is a choice or decision; it cannot be reduced to a feeling that comes and goes. It involves intellect and will, and it occurs on the level of individual human identity. The choice reveals a woman's relation to her own nature.

We now ask a difficult question: If it is true that women do have a choice to access a maternal instinct which orients them towards another human being, and if it is true that artificial methods of birth control often interfere with this access, why do so many women argue that use of technological methods of birth control are central to women's full development?<sup>120</sup> The

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<sup>118</sup> See Elisabeth Badinter, *Mother Love: Myth and Reality* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1980, after considering the examples of many women who appeared to have manifested no such maternal instinct asks: "How then can one avoid concluding, even if it seems cruel, that mother love is only a feeling...[that] may exist or may not exist; appear and disappear; reveal itself as strong or weak...?", 327.

<sup>119</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 280.

<sup>120</sup> See Joan Rothchild, "Afterward: Machina Ex Dea and Future Research," *Machina ex Dea*, "In no field are the technological changes likely to be far greater than in one basic to women's work: biological reproduction. Because control over reproduction is a fundamental condition for women's freedom, reproductive control is a recurrent theme of feminist research on reproductive technology." 219-220.

answer lies in a different value of technology and its relation to the human person. Those who support artificial birth control as central to a woman's identity often claim that reproductive technologies are in themselves value free but that they are good to the extent that women control them.<sup>121</sup> More accurately, (to counter the feminism which inhibits interpersonal growth) the technology of birth control, as a form of domination or control of woman's or man's body, is not good because it inevitably leads to contraventions of the personalistic norm. Technology is never "value free;" it always has a specific value depending upon the extent to which it treats a person as an end or as a means. Thus, when a woman decides about how to use technology in relation to her own reproductive capacities, she is defining herself as an individual woman.

Pope John Paul II suggests that one important source for woman's access to a personal liberation is through an intelligent awareness of the experience of her body. Technology, when used to dominate the self, cuts off woman's own unique access to the "feminine genius" or the orientation towards the person, by making her own nature inaccessible to herself. If technology leads to a loss of sensitivity to an woman's lived experience of the body, then women run the risk of losing the very foundation from which they have special access to the personalist norm. They risk giving away their 'birthright'.

The personal aspect of woman's identity participates in the personalist theme of self-gift to another and of receiving another. [The historical development of this notion of personal

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<sup>121</sup> The following summary by Joan Rothchild in her introduction to *Machina ex Dea*, illustrates the value free claim about technology: "Such technology may not "free" women at all if women do not control it or it is harmful to their health. But the existence of safe and effective technologies of birth control can provide women with a tool for control of their own reproduction, which is a necessary condition for liberation. Again we see technology operating as an independent variable." xxiv. A similar kind of position is stated by Jalna Hamner, "Reproductive Technology," *Machina ex Dea*, 195-6.

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identity was previously discussed in the section in this paper on ‘interpersonal relation.’ To be a person means for John Paul II to be open and available to receiving another person. In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the Pope refers to Vatican II (*Gaudium et spes* #24) to reiterate his acceptance of what distinguishes personal identity: "The human being is a person, a subject who decides for himself. At the same time, man "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self."<sup>122</sup> In his own words, "This 'law of the gift' ... is inscribed deep within the dynamic structure of the person."<sup>123</sup>

The emphasis upon act in interpersonal relations permeates the writings of Pope John Paul II writing about women. In *Mulieris Dignitatem* the Pope describes woman's personal relation to her child as follows:

Motherhood in the bio-physical sense appears to be passive: the formation process of a new life "takes place" in her, in her body, which is nevertheless profoundly involved in that process. At the same time, motherhood in its personal-ethical sense expresses a very important creativity on the part of the woman, upon whom the very humanity of the new human being mainly depends.<sup>124</sup>

Creativity, in a personal-ethical sense, involves acts of intellect and will, of knowing and loving, on the part of the mother. A woman is capable of giving herself to another person if she chooses to act in accord with her nature which is predisposed towards giving herself to a child:

Motherhood implies from the beginning a special openness to the new person: and this is precisely the woman's "part." In this

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<sup>122</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #18.

<sup>123</sup> Wojtyla, "The Personal Structure of Self-Determination," in *Person and Community*, 194.

<sup>124</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #19. His emphasis.

openness, in conceiving and giving birth to a child, the woman  
"discovers herself through a sincere gift of self."<sup>125</sup>

This is not a biological or even an individual aspect of woman's identity: "Motherhood is linked to the personal structure of the woman and to the personal dimension of the gift."<sup>126</sup> If a woman chooses to develop, through her intellect and will, her individual identity based on the personalistic norm, in this example, a child, she may nurture a capacity to lead other persons into a similar development of personal identity.

Several feminists have noted today that woman's ethical personality is marked by care or concern for other persons. Yet, they often do not extend this caring to the developing human being. They do not recognize the autonomous identity in the developing child; nor do they understand how it is woman's part to defend the weakest and most vulnerable members society.<sup>127</sup> The genius of woman flows from the capacity to pay attention to another person.

John Paul II notes several areas in which this capacity of women to receive another person and give herself to another person can transform the world. In his *Letter to Women* he says that the greater presence of women in society will lead to a humanization of institutions organized "according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity."<sup>128</sup> He states further in an Angelus reflection (August 29, 1995), that the greater presence of business women in executive

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<sup>125</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #18.

<sup>126</sup> John Paul II, *Muleris dignitatem* #18. His emphasis.

<sup>127</sup> See Carol Gilligan, *In Another Voice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>128</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Women* #4.

positions in the economy, is "giving it a new human inspiration and removing it from the recurring temptation of dull efficiency marked only by laws of profit."<sup>129</sup>

The genius of women is manifesting itself in politics, where women are both focusing on "basic areas of human life" and "on behalf of peace."<sup>130</sup> Woman's genius also extends throughout wide areas of society. John Paul II notes "that women's contribution to the welfare and progress of society is incalculable...[and even more needed] to save society from the deadly virus of degradation and violence which is today witnessing a dramatic increase."<sup>131</sup> He asks that women's genius be "more fully expressed in the life of society as a whole," and that "the widest possible space [be] open to women in all areas of culture, economics, [and] politics..."<sup>132</sup> These brief considerations raise a hope that John Paul II's new feminism opens for women's participation in society.

The final aspect of woman's identity is spiritual. The spiritual aspect of a person's identity consists in the orientation of the eternal soul towards God, both with respect to its origins and to its final end. In Christian understanding, it also includes the belief in the resurrection of the body at the end of time, so that the person has a distinct identity as a particular woman or man. The spiritual aspect is not simply eternal life of a sexless soul nor is it an undifferentiated non-material force. The spiritual aspect of the person consists in the highest operations of intellect and will and the transformation and integration of the human person who

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<sup>129</sup> John Paul II, *Genius of Women*, p. 32, #1.

<sup>130</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #1 and 2, p. 34.

<sup>131</sup> John Paul II, *Genius of Women*, p. 41, #5.

<sup>132</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Women* #10, in *Genius of Women*, p. 54 and also p. 27, #1.

forms the self through consciously willed acts. This self-formation occurs in cooperation with grace.

The Pope's new feminism proclaims Jesus Christ as a sign which will be opposed, a sign of contradiction. In *Evangelium vitae* #29 he states: "In Christ, the Gospel of life is definitively proclaimed and fully given." Jesus Christ, True God and true man guides humanity spiritually toward the perfection of new feminism. Jesus Christ reveals us to ourselves. (GS #22)

In his *Sign of Contradiction* two different common responses to Jesus Christ as the sign which will be opposed of contradiction are described: a direct opposition and an indirect opposition. Direct opposition is a more extreme position of response; it is an undisguised rejection of the truth as proclaimed by Jesus Christ. Direct opposition may be found in those feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir or Mary Daly who describe themselves as 'Post-Christian' and who subsequently view the Church and the Pope as enemies of all women.<sup>133</sup> An indirect opposition to the sign of contradiction seeks to "re-shape" the full truth of the Person of Jesus Christ to fit secular assumptions of modern civilization while "paying him lip-service."<sup>134</sup> Indirect opposition to John Paul II's new feminism occurs in those feminists who seek to reshape and secularize moral and social teachings while remaining Catholic in name. Others, such as belong to the National Organization of Women, are simply silent about God, privatizing religious beliefs to such an extent that they no longer function in the public arena. Still others indirectly oppose Jesus Christ

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<sup>133</sup> For example, deBeauvoir makes the following claims: "...there is no human nature, and thus no feminine nature. It is not something given." and "the embryo, as long as it is not yet considered human, as long as it is not a being with human relationships with its mother or its father, it's nothing, one can eliminate the embryo.". Margaret A Simmons, "Two Interviews with Simone de Beauvoir (1982), *Hypatia*, vol.3, no.3 (winter 1989), 18-19.

<sup>134</sup> Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction*, 199.

by giving lip service to following Him, but acting contrary to the content and witness of his teachings, calling themselves Catholics or Christians for the choice of abortion. The acts reveal the person, and the degree of indirect or direct opposition to Jesus Christ through willed acts participates in the same dynamic as the opposition to John Paul II's New Feminism.

Many new feminists embrace the core of John Paul II's spiritual understanding of woman's identity. This is found in woman's intimate and personal relation with God, in that "God entrusts the human being to her in a special way,"<sup>135</sup> in her encounter with Jesus Christ, she discovers the commandment of love, the new law of reciprocity, and her particular part in acting in accordance with his teachings and model; and she can fulfil her personal destiny of movement towards union with God by choosing to live in conformity with the personalistic norm and the commandment of love.

God's entrustment of the human being to woman is well noted in *Mulieris dignitatem* #30 as a great source of her inner strength: "The moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that God entrusts the human being to her in a special way." The Pope adds that the human being is entrusted to men as well, "but this entrusting concerns women in a special way --- precisely by reason of their femininity --- and this in a particular way determines their vocation." The Divine source of this aspect of woman's identity reinforces the claim that woman's particular attention to the person is not simply the result of biological determinism or even of her own willed acts.

A woman is strong because of her awareness of this entrusting, strong because of the fact that God "entrusts the human being to her," always and in every way, even in the situations of social

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<sup>135</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #30.

discrimination in which she may find herself. This awareness and this fundamental vocation speak to women of the dignity which they receive from God himself, and this makes them "strong" and strengthens their vocation.<sup>136</sup>

A second spiritual aspect of woman's identity is found in her attraction to the commandment of love and law of reciprocity. The ultimate source of this norm is not some rational principle but the teachings of Jesus Christ, who revealed the will of the Father during his time on earth. In *Evangelium vitae* John Paul II traces the historical development of the law of the Old and New Covenant which "has entrusted the life of every individual to his or her fellow human beings, brothers and sisters, according to the law of reciprocity in giving and receiving, or self giving and of the acceptance of others."<sup>137</sup> Jesus Christ, in the witness of his life ~~on~~ earth, "showed what heights and depths this law of reciprocity can reach."<sup>138</sup> Now through the Holy Spirit, "Christ gives new content and meaning to the law of reciprocity, to our being entrusted to one another."<sup>139</sup>

A third aspect of spiritual identity focuses on the fulfilment of a woman's identity. In *Mulieris Dignitatem* the particular relationship of the law of reciprocity to woman's identity is specified: "*the dignity of women is measured by the order of love*, which is essentially the order

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<sup>136</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #30.

<sup>137</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #76. John Paul II states in *Dives et misericordia* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1980) that "the original anthropomorphic aspect" of the word used in the Old Testament for mercy "(rahahim)" in its very root, denotes the love of a mother (rehem= mother's womb). From the deep and original bond --- indeed the unity--- that links a mother to her child there springs a particular relationship to the child, a particular love...it constitutes an interior necessity: an exigency of the heart. It is, as it were, a 'feminine' variation of the masculine fidelity to self expressed by *hesed*. ", note 52.

<sup>138</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #76.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

of justice and charity.<sup>140</sup> He affirms the foundation of the commandment of love: "Love is an ontological and ethical requirement of the person. The person must be loved, since love alone corresponds to what the person is."<sup>141</sup> Acts of love may be done by the personal choice of will and intellect, but they also have their inspiration and source in the Holy Spirit which prompts a person to imitate Jesus Christ. Only by entering into a full relation with others by acting according to the commandment of love and the law of reciprocity, will a woman (or man) find fulfilment and perfection: "This ontological affirmation also indicates the ethical dimension of a person's vocation. Woman can only find herself by giving love to others."<sup>142</sup>

In *Fides et ratio*, which describes the complementarity roles of faith and reason in the search for fulfilment, John Paul II notes the inner momentum that drives a person towards the ultimate goal:

From all that I have said to this point it emerges that men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable --- a search for the truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves. Christian faith comes to meet them, offering the concrete possibility of reaching the goal which they seek.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #29. His emphasis.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem* #30. The Pope has recently recognized four Christian women whose lives expressed the genius of Christian feminism. St. Terese of Lisieux, named Doctor of the Church, revealed how the strengthened will could support a vigorous contemplative love at the heart of the Church, St. Edith Stein revealed how a sharpened intellect could support a martyr's gift of life in love, Mother Teresa of Calcutta revealed how an increase of love for the poorest of the poor could transform countries around the world, and Blessed Genna revealed how an increase of love for just one unborn child could witness to a mother's gift of life.

<sup>143</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et ratio* #33.

The notion of a journey to an ultimate destination is often used by John Paul II to describe our life on earth. Likening this journey to a pilgrimage, Mary is characterized by the Pope as our pilgrim guide. Because she completed the pilgrimage in her own life as a woman, she is able to guide other women today.

Mary, the great sign in Heaven, continues to serve as a metaphor for the Church and for the body of the faithful in the church. Indeed, Mary becomes the vibrant source of the new feminism to which John Paul II is appealing in his new evangelization. Mary, his mother, is a great sign from heaven because she is "the one who accepted 'Life' in the name of all and for the sake of all ... she is thus most closely and personally associated with the Gospel of Life."<sup>144</sup> The Pope emphasizes Mary's response at the Annunciation as a personal act:

[Mary] is truly the Mother of God, because motherhood concerns the whole person, not just the body, nor even just human "nature.... [T]hrough her response of faith Mary exercises her free will and thus fully shares with her personal and feminine "I" in the event of the Incarnation. ...

This event is clearly interpersonal in character: it is a dialogue.<sup>145</sup>

The second part of the encyclical *Mother of the Redeemer* is entitled "The Mother of God at the Center of the Pilgrim Church:"

Mary became not only the "nursing mother" of the Son of Man but also the "associate of unique nobility" of the Messiah and Redeemer. As I have already said, she advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and in this pilgrimage to the foot of the Cross there was simultaneously accomplished her maternal cooperation with the Savior's whole mission through her actions and sufferings. Along

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<sup>144</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* #102.

<sup>145</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #4 and 5.

the path of this collaboration with the work of her Son, the Redeemer, Mary's motherhood underwent a singular transformation, becoming ever more imbued with "burning charity" towards all those to whom Christ's mission was directed. Through the "burning charity," which sought to achieve, in union with Christ, the restoration of "supernatural life to souls," Mary entered, in a way all her own, into the one mediation "between God and men" which is the mediation of the man Christ Jesus.<sup>146</sup>

Mary is the great sign from Heaven because she embodies personally and spiritually the path -  
way for pilgrims. May the fruits of a new feminism truly transform our culture to support the  
full dignity of human life.

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<sup>146</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris mater* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1987), #39.

## Questions asked at the Notre Dame Lecture

- ✓ 1. What does the Pope say about the relation between femininity and masculinity and a woman's and man's identity?
- ✓ 2. How can his view that woman's part is to pay attention to the person in all circumstances be protected against the pattern where women is expected to do everything to take care of others?
- ✓ 3. Does his view that woman has a special relation to the personalistic norm mean that woman is better than man ethically?
- ✓ 4. Is his view that woman has a biological predisposition to care for the person mean that she is biologically determined?
- ✓ 5. Does the Pope advocate that women should all stay home and care for their children as some Catholic's suggest?
- ✗ 6. What is the relation of vocation to the Pope's new feminism? What are its implications for particular vocations?
- ✗ 7. Why can't we have just a continuum of masculine and feminine characteristics without saying that only men should be masculine and only women feminine? Why is the notion of being a woman or a man so important?
- ✗ 8. Is the soul male or female?
- ✗ 9. Has the Pope written anything on the genius of men or men's identity?
- 10.